NUMBER 4

DALGODA™

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BY JAN STRNAD

AND DENNIS FUJITAKE

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

DALGODA

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INTRODUCTION BY JAN STRNAD

Hello, and welcome to the fourth issue of *Dalgoda*!

This is the big Christmas issue, planned since June 1, 1984 to coincide with our most lucrative national holiday.

So much for impressing you with our timeliness. Perhaps we can impress you with our humility instead, for humbled we are. While it's no great crime for comic book characters to exist in a time continuum different from that of the real world—in fact, it's virtually unavoidable—there's a simple *elegance* to publishing the Christmas issue in December that has, this time, escaped us.

("What does he mean, *this time*?" Gary thinks. Surely he's not going to try this stunt *again*!" We'll see.)

But there are weightier matters than intended Christmas issues not coming out at Christmas clouding the Strnad noggin these days.

This is a dark time for the alternative press. The financial failure of large alternative publishers like Pacific puts a strain on *all* such publishers. Printers who are burned when a comic book publisher declares bankruptcy raise their prices and stiffen their credit terms. As a result, most deluxe alternative books went to a $1.75 cover price last year, and the price of *Dalgoda* will be going up, too.

That puts a span of *one dollar* between the alternative books and most mainstream comics, which in turn widens the gap between the mainstream's six-figure circulations and the alternative press's four- and five-figure sales. Clearly the alternative press needs to experiment with format and design, book length, production values, publishing schedules, promotion, contracts, and everything else that goes into producing a comic book in order to narrow those gaps. It will be a time of change.

I ask you to bear with us and our fellow publishers during the months ahead. And don't suffer in silence! Feel free at any time to write Gary Groth of Fantagraphics Books, Denis Kitchen of Kitchen Sink Press, Mike Gold of First Comics, and all the other alternative people to let them know what you think.

Next issue... and the issue after that: We wrap up our first year's storyline with the surprising two-part adventure, "Dalgoda, Come Home!" "Grimwood's Daughter" approaches its climax as the army of Man meets the Elves of Grimwood Castle in issue #5, and #6 writes "fini" to the story of Tiroi, Brii, and the Grimwood Clan.

I'll see you then!

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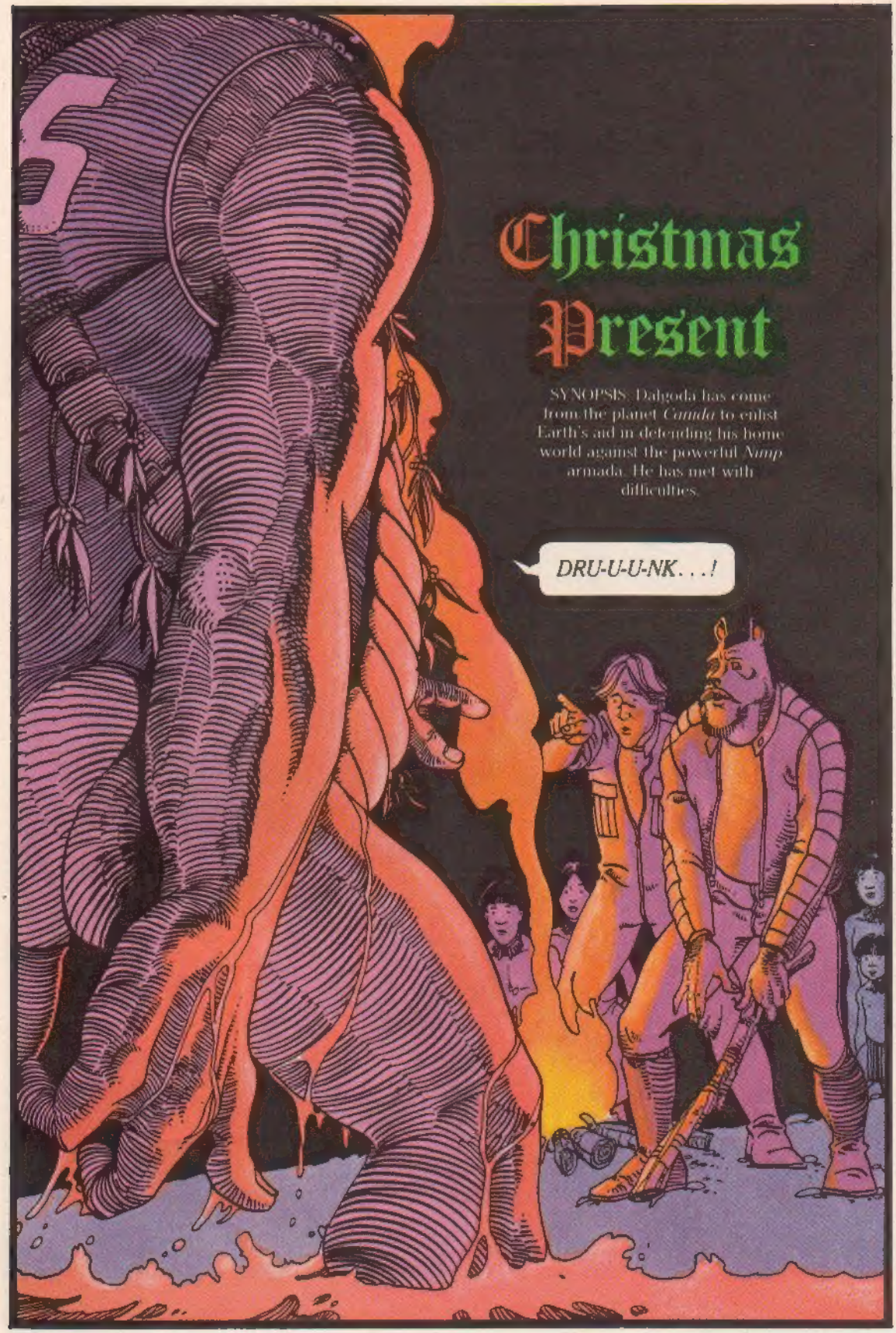
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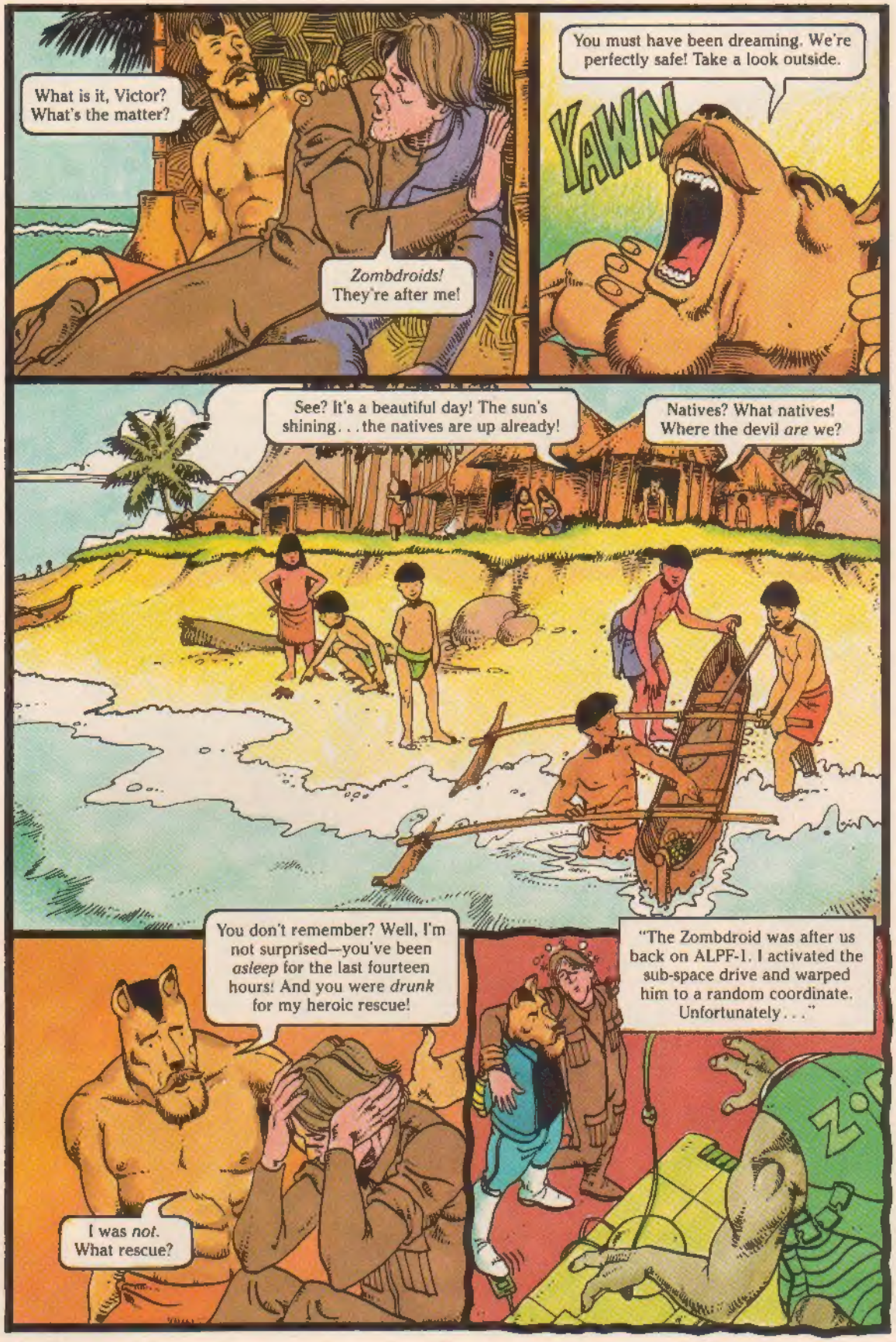
Christmas Present
SYNOPSIS: Dalgoda has come from the planet *Canada* to enlist Earth's aid in defending his home world against the powerful *Nimp* armada. He has met with difficulties.
DRU-U-U-NK. . . !

You were *drunk* when you crashed that ship that killed me, Victor Kneedam! *Drunk!*
No—I wasn't . . . I swear! I never touched a drop! I was *framed*!
You were *drunk*! The tests proved it! Posey Ravencraft testified in court!
The tests were *rigged*! Ravencraft *lied*! He's part of the *plot*! I *swear* they *framed* me!
YOU MURDERED ME!
NO! No!
No! Let me go . . . !
Victor!
And me!
And me!
And me!
And me!
Z-3
Z-3


What is it, Victor? What's the matter?
Zombdroids! They're after me!
You must have been dreaming. We're perfectly safe! Take a look outside.
YAWN
See? It's a beautiful day! The sun's shining. . . the natives are up already!
Natives? What natives! Where the devil *are* we?
You don't remember? Well, I'm not surprised—you've been *asleep* for the last fourteen hours! And you were *drunk* for my heroic rescue!
I was *not*. What rescue?
"The Zombdroid was after us back on ALPF-1. I activated the sub-space drive and warped him to a random coordinate. Unfortunately. . ."

"...we were caught in the energy field, too! I had no idea where we'd end up."
"We materialized over the ocean. The Zombdroid couldn't swim—sank like a rock. You really don't remember any of this?"
"Should I *want* to?"
"Luckily, we were picked up by some friendly natives. You *missed* the welcoming festivities—you were semi-comatose by then."
SNORT
They've been wonderful hosts! The food is superb—they eat all their fish *raw*!
Dear lord...
Get it out of my sight! Oh, merciful heavens —*please* let me not puke....
I'll take his!

What is it you call your sickness? A...hangdown?

Hangover.

Hangover. Ah—so you *were* drunk.

HMMMM

You know, Dal...it's that kind of cheap trick that *strains* interstellar relations.

What *I* want to know is...how'd you *manage* it? *I* never saw you take a drink! You even refused wine with dinner!

I *didn't* manage it. *They* managed it! I was framed!

Somebody set me up to get me busted from space duty. They used some kind of secret *injection*, probably. It's the only explanation.

Sounds pretty thin, Victor. I'm sorry, but I just can't believe that.

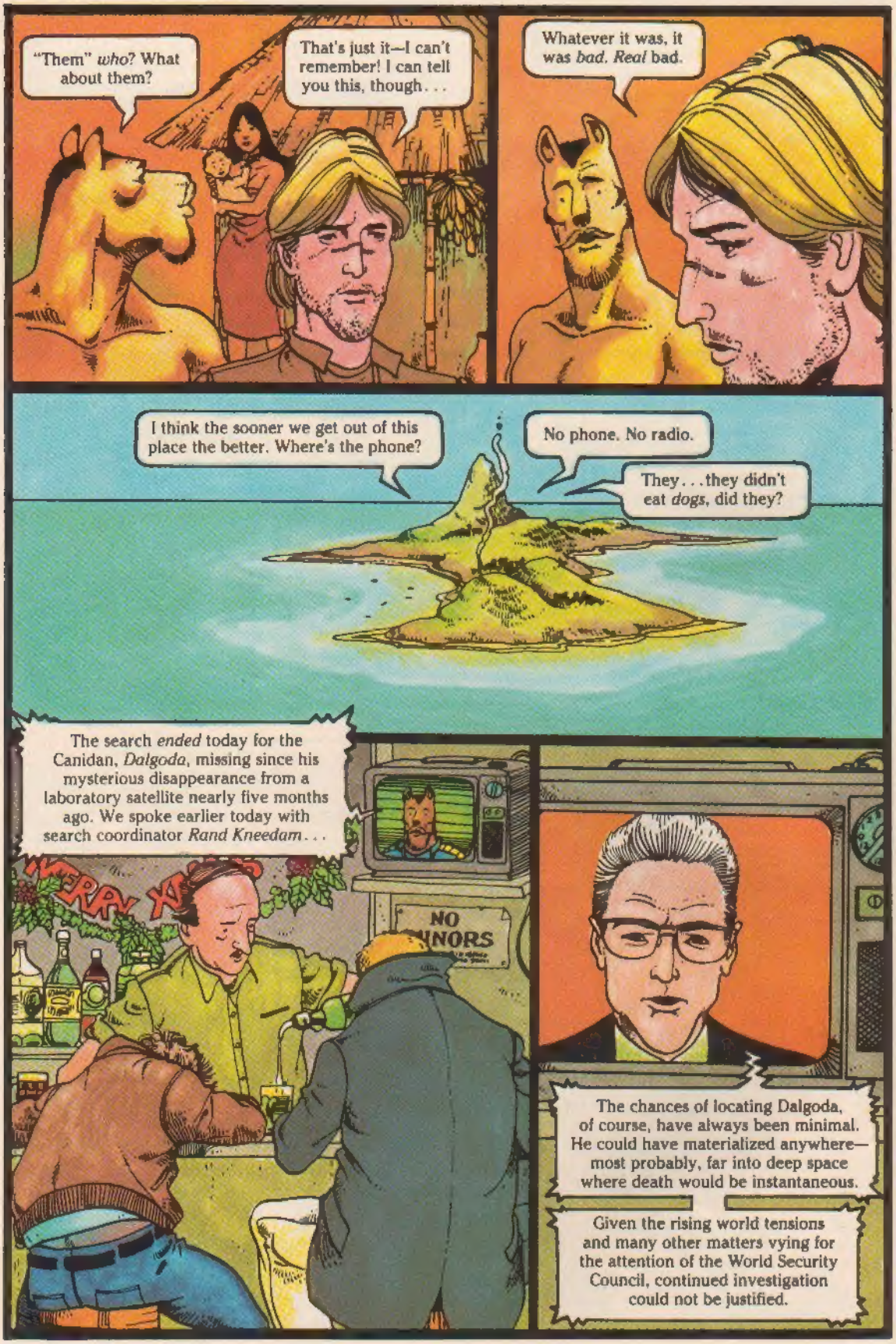
Who *are* these people, Dal? I've seen them before somewhere.

You have? Then... you know where we are?

No. I've ...I've seen their *picture*.

National Geographic, maybe. Not long ago. I remember their necklaces...very distinctive.

Yes, it's them all right. No doubt.


"Them" *who*? What about them?
That's just it—I can't remember! I can tell you this, though...
Whatever it was, it was *bad*. *Real* bad.
I think the sooner we get out of this place the better. Where's the phone?
No phone. No radio.
They...they didn't eat *dogs*, did they?
The search *ended* today for the Canidan, *Dalgoda*, missing since his mysterious disappearance from a laboratory satellite nearly five months ago. We spoke earlier today with search coordinator *Rand Kneedam*...
NO
The chances of locating Dalgoda, of course, have always been minimal. He could have materialized anywhere—most probably, far into deep space where death would be instantaneous.
Given the rising world tensions and many other matters vying for the attention of the World Security Council, continued investigation could not be justified.

Mr. Kneedam, does this put an end to the Canidan sub-space project?
Not entirely, but certain objectives have been . . . ah . . . *modified*. No replacement for Dalgoda was ever sent, as you know, indicating a low level of interest on the *Canidan* side as well.
This being the case, sir, what direction will the sub-space project be taking next? We understand a sub-space drive has been installed in the new, orbiting *Bio-Sphere*, for example . . .
We're still negotiating with the Canidans, so I can't reveal any details. However, I *can* say that a mutually satisfying agreement is very close to being made.
Thank you, Mr. Kneedam.
Meanwhile, unseasonably heavy rainfall *continues* to pound the Honolulu area, further dampening local Christmas spirit. Aberrant weather patterns nationwide . . .
Thanks, Posey. *Mele Kalikimaka!*
Uh-huh.
BAR
So it was over . . . *officially*. What was it about the announcement that drove a spike through his heart? He'd thought he was beyond all that . . . thought he'd already hit bottom. Just goes to show you . . .
You can always fall a little bit farther.
MASSAGE
EXOTIC MASSAGE PARLOUR
Five months. Dal had been gone five months. Was that all?
They'd bounced *him* from the project immediately, of course. Kneedam hadn't wasted any time doing *that*. Busted him back Earthside, back to Honolulu. On "hold." In limbo. No man's land.
Honolulu was strictly Level One under Amendment Thirty. A Low-Tech area where the cars still ran on wheels and climate control was *verboten* and omnicyllin was a black market item and you could still get drunk any day of the week. *Every* day of the week, if you wanted.
Level One, Low-Tech. Purgatory . . . with a big, greasy stairway going nowhere but *down*.

He shouldn't have lost his cool at the hearing. Shouldn't have blamed Kneedam for Dal's disappearance. Shouldn't have brought up all that old stuff abour Victor. Shouldn't have made all those stupid accusations. Shouldn't have shouted!

He should've just let bygones be bygones. Should've let them sweep it all under the carpet again. Should've kept his fists in his *pockets*, for Chris'sakes!

Should've . . . should've . . . should've . . .

They'd never reassign him now.

HOONK

He knew what was waiting for him down here. He'd *resigned* once . . . left the Service by choice. And he'd come running back *begging* to get back in!

Thank God they'd taken him. Midshipman on an antique Navy ship wasn't much to his liking, but at least he'd had a *job* . . . something to *do* . . . some kind of *purpose*.

And hope . . . he had *that* back then. Not like now.

Then *Dal* had dropped into his life. An error in navigation . . . a splash landing in the wrong ocean . . . retrieval by the wrong ship—with *Posey* on board. They'd hit it off. And before he knew it . . .

. . . he was back in *space*, back among the stars! Damn it . . . he was back where he *belonged*! A *miracle* had brought him home . . . a one-in-a-million chance . . .

. . . *lost*. The search was off. Dal was dead. The dream was dead. *He* was dead. Level One, Low-Tech walking dead.

GIVE

How long could it go on like this? All this *rain* . . . washing nothing, carrying nothing away . . . just beating it all in deeper

Lord. . . how had he gotten so bad in only five months? Marty must have been spiking the booze with *dechuil* again.
Keeps you coming back for more, that's for sure
One in a million. . .
Poor Dal. . . exploding in deep space. . . frying in the heart of some dying sun For what? Victor Kneedam. . . !
One chance in a million. Gone now. . . spewing across space, icicles of flesh and bone spinning through the cold, dark reaches. . . ! Incinerated, vaporized. . .
Poor Dal. Poor Posey.
How long could this go on?
This wasn t life. . .
We're just alike, Santa, you and me, Santa— ragged *Claus*. . . ha! You and me. . scuttling on the . . the
How's that go? "Scuttling on the *something, something* seas. . . "? Well, what's the difference?
What's the point, Santa? Will you just tell me that? What's the goddamn *point*?
Sh. Here he is.
Goodbye, mother

I can't imagine what Victor's so *worried* about. These people have been the most gracious hosts.. and the women are positively *charming*!
Yes, my dear? What are you trying to tell me? Do you want me to follow you?
HAHAHA
Wait! Don t run off! I m coming!
GIGGLE!
Absolutely delightful...!
Oh, cripes...*now* what?
Dal...come on! We're getting *off* this island! Look! I stole us a boat!
Huh? *Leave*? Why would we want to do that?

Where would we go? There isn't any other land in sight! Surely a ship will be along in a day or two!
Yeah, well, I'm not waiting!
Something's fishy around here, and I don't mean just the food! I'm getting out of here before they feed us to the *volcano god* or something!
Oh, come on— Victor, talk sense! These people pulled us out of the water. . gave us shelter *fed* us . !
Fed us. . . right! Don't you see? They're *fattening us up*!
But I *like* being fattened up!
Stay here, then! But I'm telling you—I've *read* about these guys and it was nothing good! They've got *plans* for you, buddy boy!
I'm taking *my* chances on the open sea! If you want to join me, hop aboard!
Really, Victor, this is insane.
All right, all right—I'll go! But do we have to leave so *soon*? How about . . . uhm . . . later this afternoon?
Now!

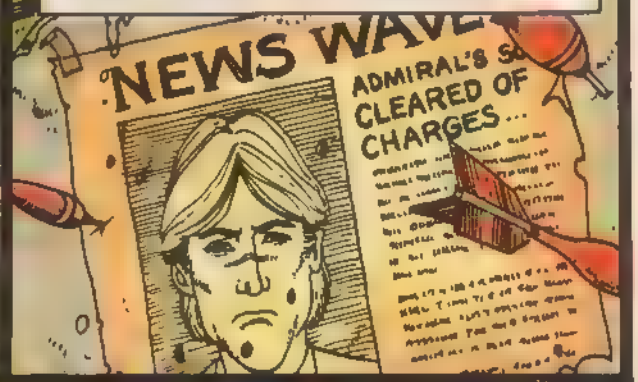
Oh dear gods! Don't tell me she's...she isn't...she *is*! But.. this isn't *fair*!
All right, Dalgoda...don't panic. They told you there'd be moments like this ...under fire...caught between enemy lines...split-second decisions to make under the most harrowing circumstances..
Gods!
Certainly Victor knows more about Earth cultures than *I* do. He has *read* about these people...and he seems awfully *determined*...!
But one mustn't ignore one's own *instincts*! Still, instincts *can* be deceiving when dealing with alien...oh dear gods! She's let [illegible] *drop*!
My dear! My dear! Wait! Wait for me!

It was never going to end. The orders would never come. The checks would never come, would always be delayed and delayed again. The rain would never quit.

The rain would never quit and the corner Santa would never dry out and *he* would never dry out and the orders would never come.

It was never going to end.

The rain would always pound and the roof would always leak and the water would drop like footsteps on the stairway leading down. Little men would murder and go free, and other men would die by steps . .



TAP TAP TAP

. . .and the water would drop like steps on the stairway and the orders would never come and the rain would always pound. . .and he would lie in the center of a spinning world waiting for the ride to end.

But the ride would never end. The ride would never end. The ride would never end. The ride would never end. . .

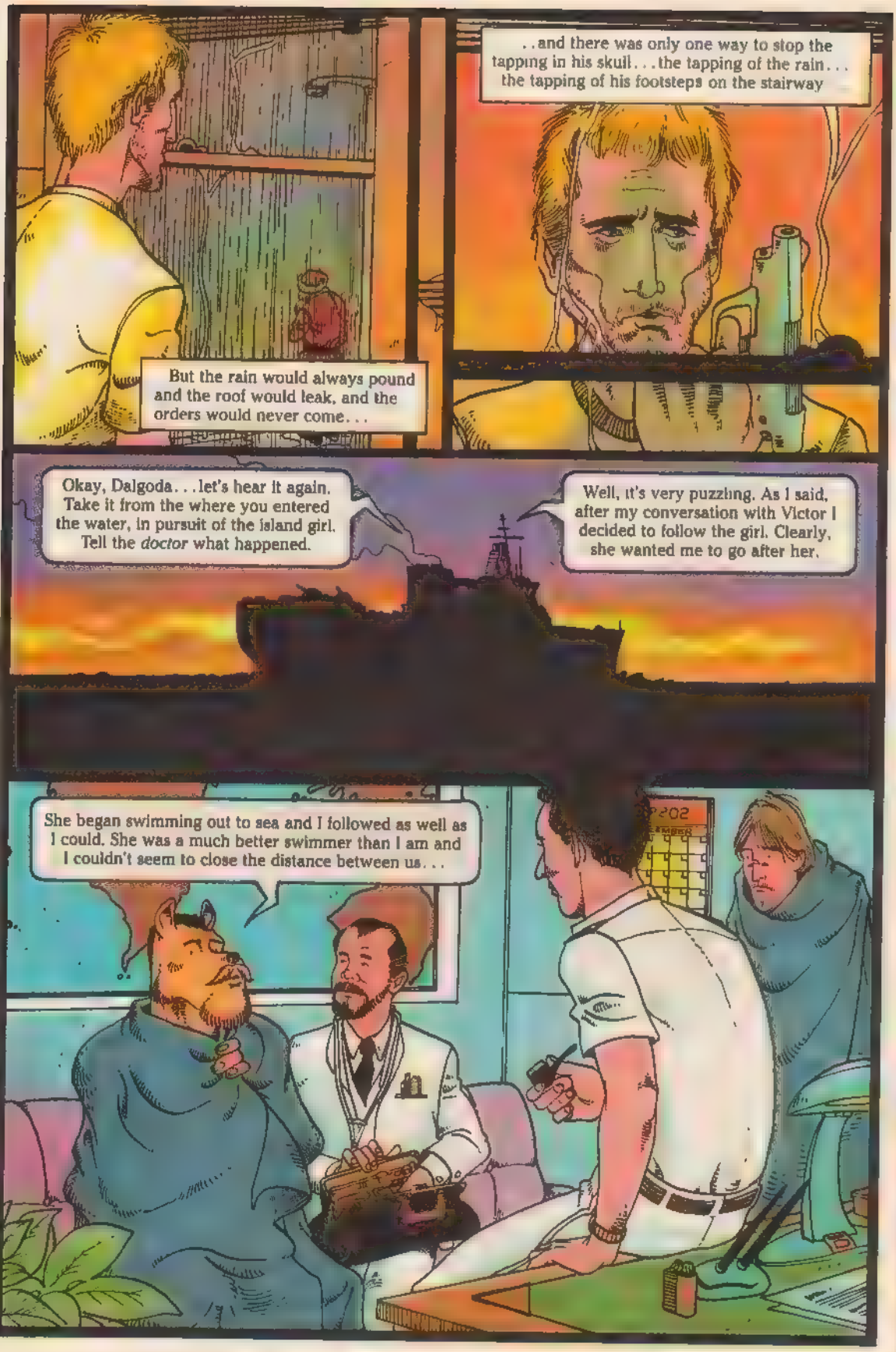
TAP TAP TAP

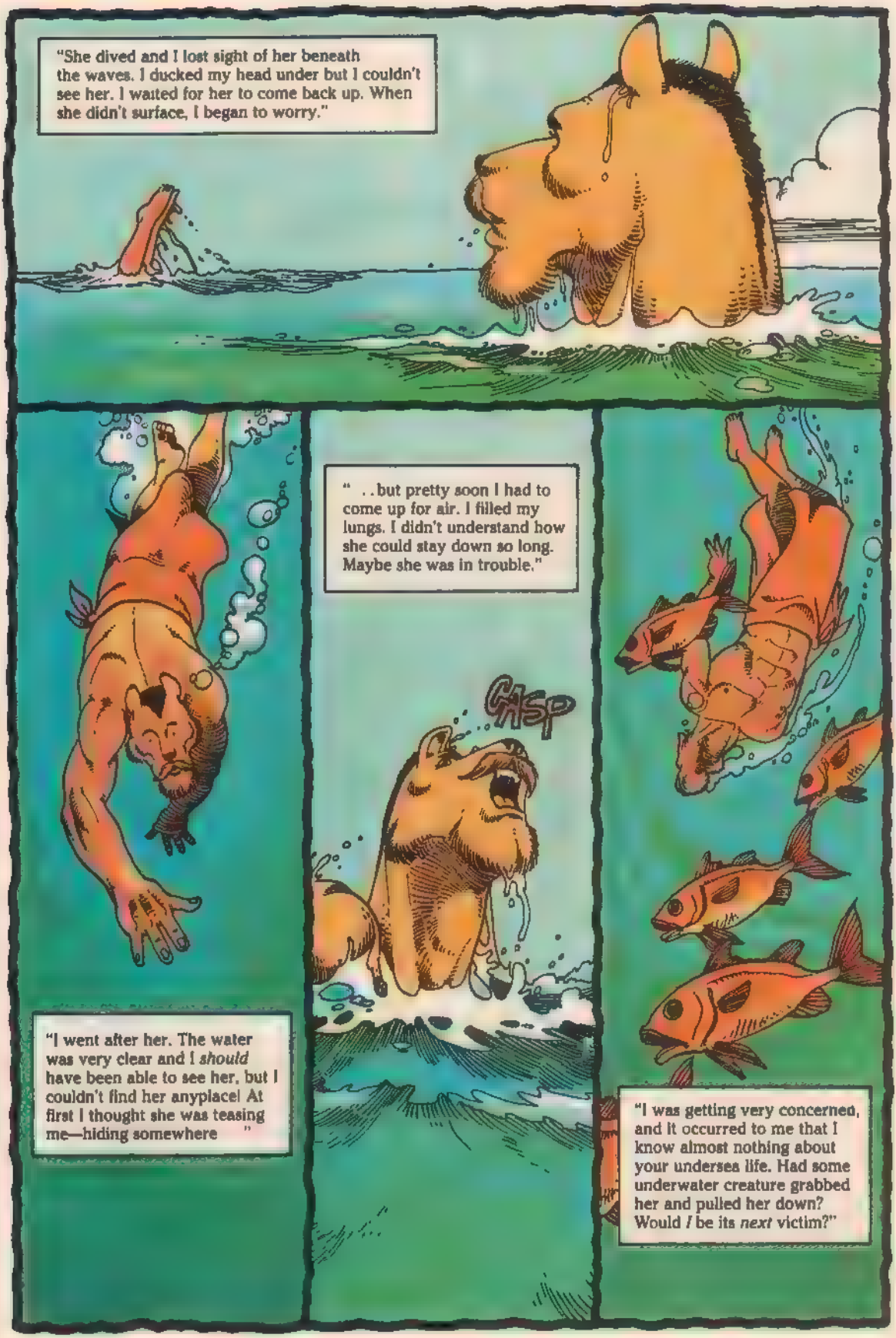
. . .and the rain would fall and the footsteps tapping in his skull would never end . .and somehow he had to clear his head.

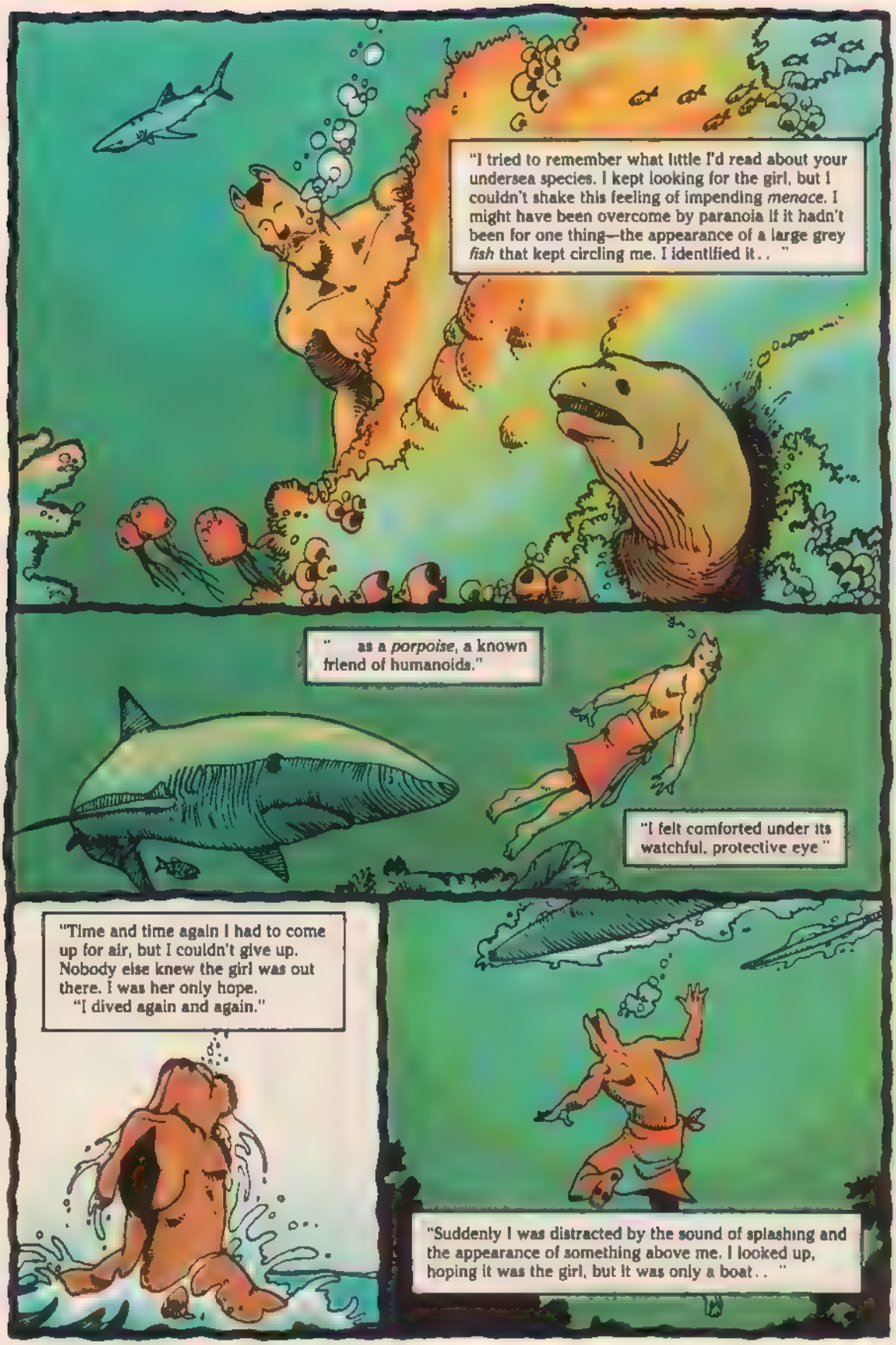
TAP TAP TAP

He had to clear his head of the alcohol. . .and the declivil that Marty put in the drinks to keep him coming back. . .and the sound of the raindrops and his own tired steps on the stairway going down. . .

He had to clear his head.


But the rain would always pound and the roof would leak, and the orders would never come. . .
. . and there was only one way to stop the tapping in his skull. . . the tapping of the rain. . . the tapping of his footsteps on the stairway
Okay, Dalgoda. . . let's hear it again. Take it from the where you entered the water, in pursuit of the island girl. Tell the *doctor* what happened.
Well, it's very puzzling. As I said, after my conversation with Victor I decided to follow the girl. Clearly, she wanted me to go after her.
She began swimming out to sea and I followed as well as I could. She was a much better swimmer than I am and I couldn't seem to close the distance between us. . .


"She dived and I lost sight of her beneath the waves. I ducked my head under but I couldn't see her. I waited for her to come back up. When she didn't surface, I began to worry."
"I went after her. The water was very clear and I *should* have been able to see her, but I couldn't find her anyplace! At first I thought she was teasing me—hiding somewhere "
" . . but pretty soon I had to come up for air. I filled my lungs. I didn't understand how she could stay down so long. Maybe she was in trouble."
GASP
"I was getting very concerned, and it occurred to me that I know almost nothing about your undersea life. Had some underwater creature grabbed her and pulled her down? Would *I* be its *next* victim?"


"I tried to remember what little I'd read about your undersea species. I kept looking for the girl, but I couldn't shake this feeling of impending *menace*. I might have been overcome by paranoia if it hadn't been for one thing—the appearance of a large grey *fish* that kept circling me. I identified it . . "
" as a *porpoise*, a known friend of humanoids."
"I felt comforted under its watchful, protective eye "
"Time and time again I had to come up for air, but I couldn't give up. Nobody else knew the girl was out there. I was her only hope.
"I dived again and again."
"Suddenly I was distracted by the sound of splashing and the appearance of something above me. I looked up, hoping it was the girl, but it was only a boat . . "

" *Victor's* boat!"

Dal! Thank goodness I found you! Something *incredible*'s happened! You won't believe this, but this *island*. . .!

Victor! I've lost the *girl*! I can't find her *anywhere*! Have you *seen* her?

Never mind about the girl! Let me tell you about the *island*!

Later! I'm going back down! She has to be down there *somewhere* . . . she must be *drowning*. . . !

Dal!

GURGLE GLUG

Listen to me, damn it! The island's *gone*! The *girl's* probably gone *too*!

SPUTTER KAFF

What do you mean 'gone'? How can it be 'gone'? It's right here!

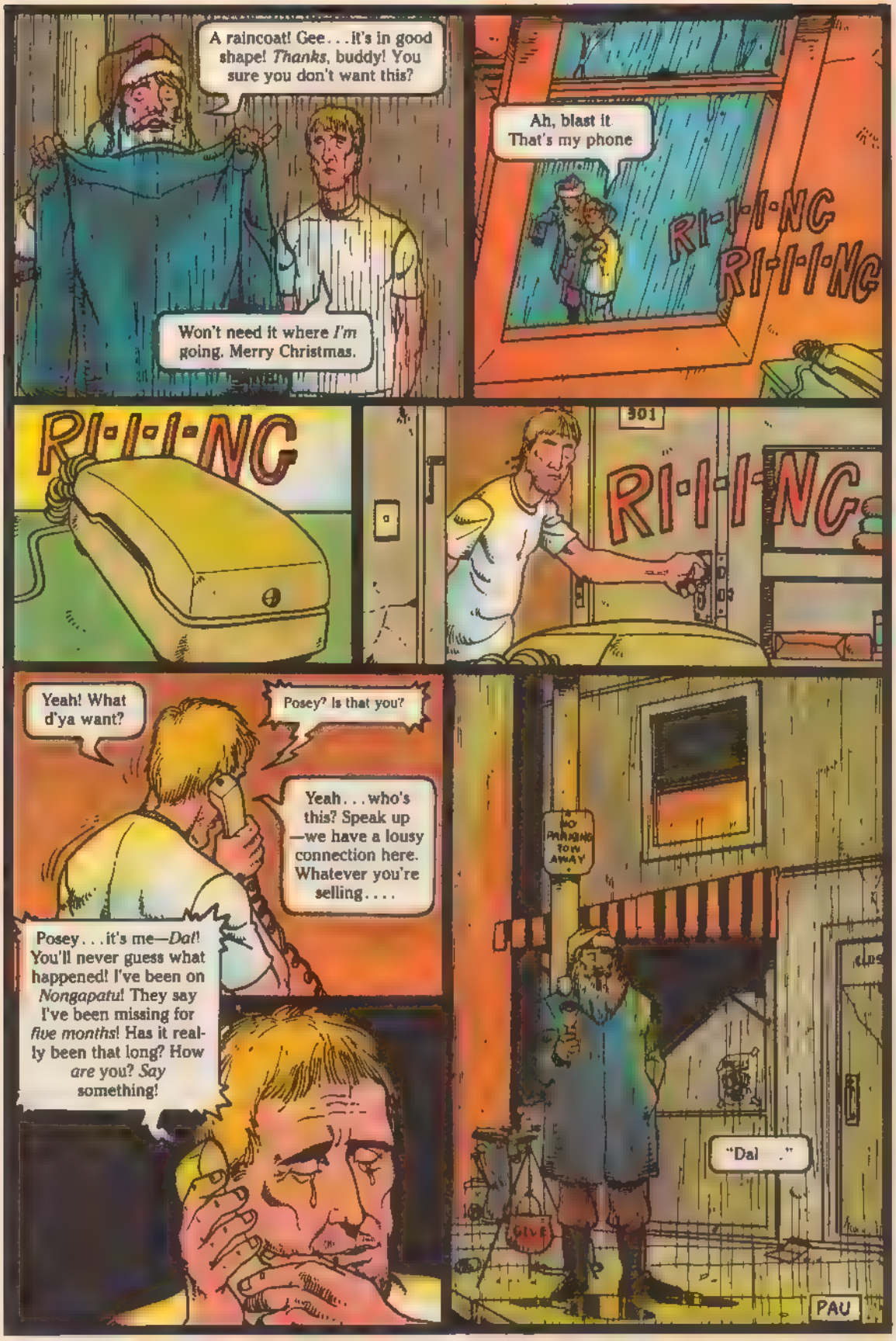
Then *you* find it!

Dear gods
What kind of islands do you *have* on this planet? How can they just *disappear* like that? What happens to the *people*?
The island disappeared because it was *never there*! At least, it hasn't been there for the last fifteen years!
You call that an explanation? I don't get it!
I didn't get it either, until all of a sudden, I remembered where...
Will you *cut that out*?!
KNEEDAM
Oh sorry. You were saying ?
I remembered where I'd seen the islanders before! It wasn't in *National Geographic*—it was the *Enquirer*! Those were the necklace people of *Nongapatu*! Fifteen years ago...
...during the war, the government tested out some new kind of *bomb* on the island of *Nongapatu*. They called it an 'S-Bomb' —something about negating the force that binds atoms together. Anyhow, the thing is, the government dropped the bomb but forgot to *evacuate the natives* first!

THE ENQUIRER
NONGAPATU ISLE WIPED OUT BY HUGE S-BOMB TEST
"BABY EATS AARDVARK!"
"The necklace people were wiped out, of course. The *Enquirer* printed a file photo of them and I finally made the connection! Dal. . "
" those natives we met. . . they *didn't exist*! They were all killed *fifteen years ago*! The island was totally *obliterated*! Whatever it was *doing* here the last couple of days, it just *quit doing it*!
"I was shocked! My stomach went all queasy and a shiver crawled up my spine. Victor must have been frightened too, because he started performing some odd little ritual, warding off evil spirits, I supposed."
DO DO DO DO DO DO DO DO
By the *gods*, Victor, think of it! What would've happened to us if we'd been on the island when it *vanished* again? We might have gone *with* it!
And the island girl *knew* it! Victor! She led me away from the island *knowing* it was about to disappear! She saved my *life*!
So why'd she lead you into the open water? Why didn't she just let you come to the boat with me?

ABANDON SHIP!
Look!
TWINK!
Luckily, your ship came by and rescued us shortly after that. Everything worked out rather well, actually.
That's all very interesting, Dalgoda. You've done your homework—we did pick you up in the vicinity of what used to be Nongapatu. But you've missed one important point. Namely...
You speak as if you spent a single night on the island...but you warped out of the space station *five months ago*. How do you account for *that*?

Five months!? But it was only *yesterday*!
See for yourself! This is Christmas Eve December 24th, 2202 You vanished last *July*!
·2202·
·DECEMBER·
Jeez, Dal— where've we *been*?
Quick—get me to a radio! I have to telephone *Posey*! He'll be worried *sick* about me!
R-I-I-I-NG R-I-I-I-NG R-I-I-I-NG
They're patching me through direct, but no one's answering. He must be *out*...
RI-I-NG RI-I-NG RI-I-NG


A raincoat! Gee... it's in good shape! *Thanks*, buddy! You sure you don't want this?
Won't need it where *I'm* going. Merry Christmas.
Ah, blast it. That's my phone
RI-I-I-NC
RI-I-I-NC
RI-I-I-NC
901
RI-I-I-NC
Yeah! What d'ya want?
Posey? Is that you?
Yeah... who's this? Speak up —we have a lousy connection here. Whatever you're selling....
Posey... it's me—*Dal*! You'll never guess what happened! I've been on *Nongapatu*! They say I've been missing for *five months*! Has it really been that long? How *are* you? *Say* something!
NO PARKING TOW AWAY
"Dal ."
PAU

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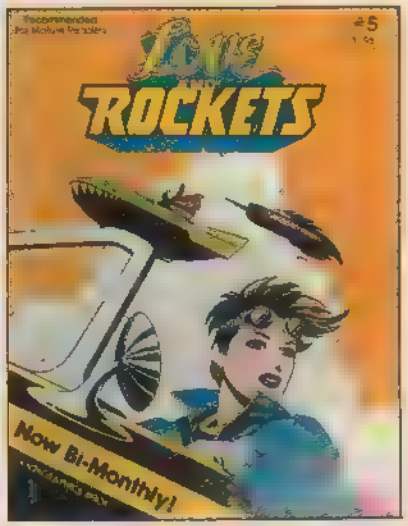

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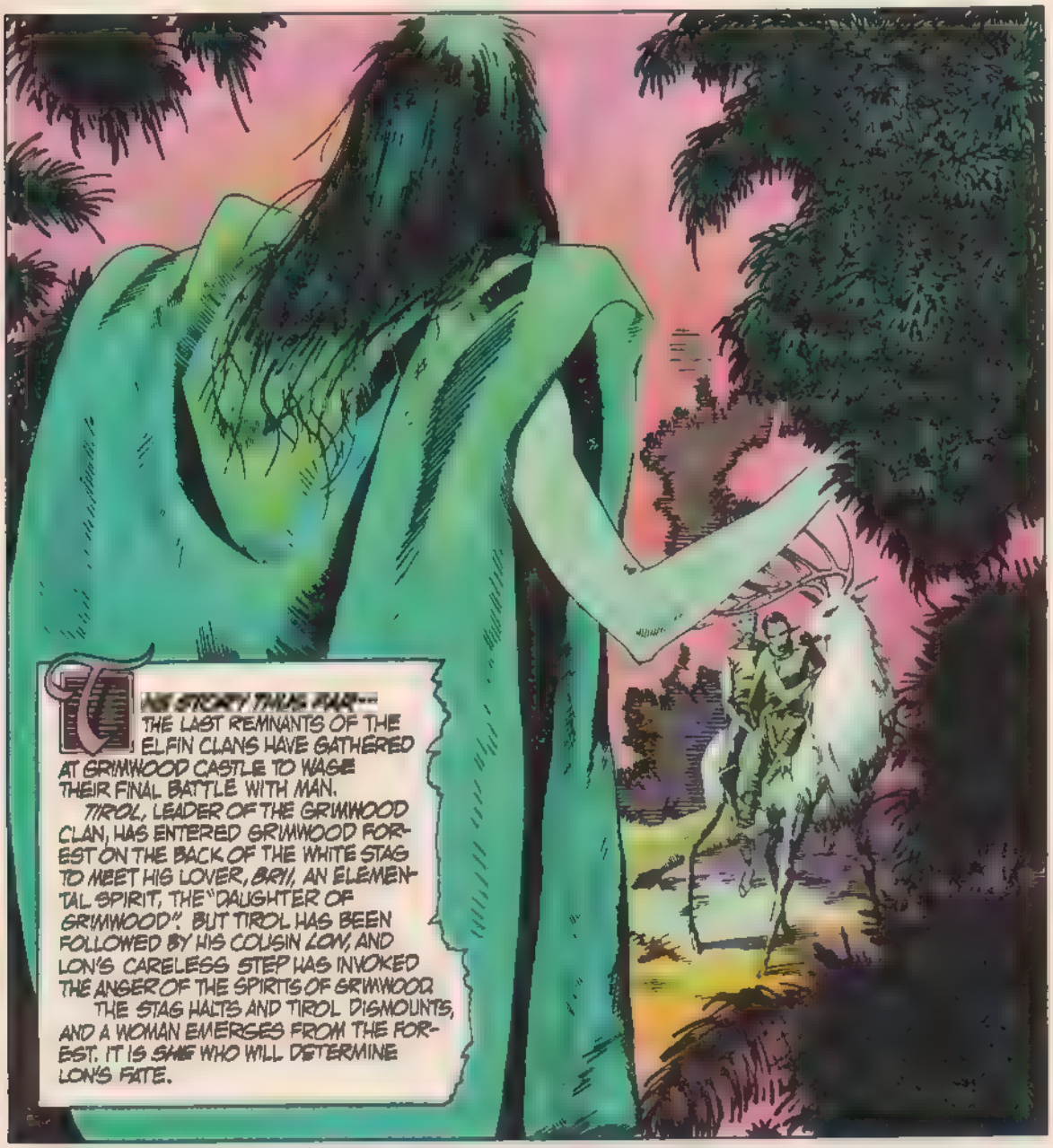
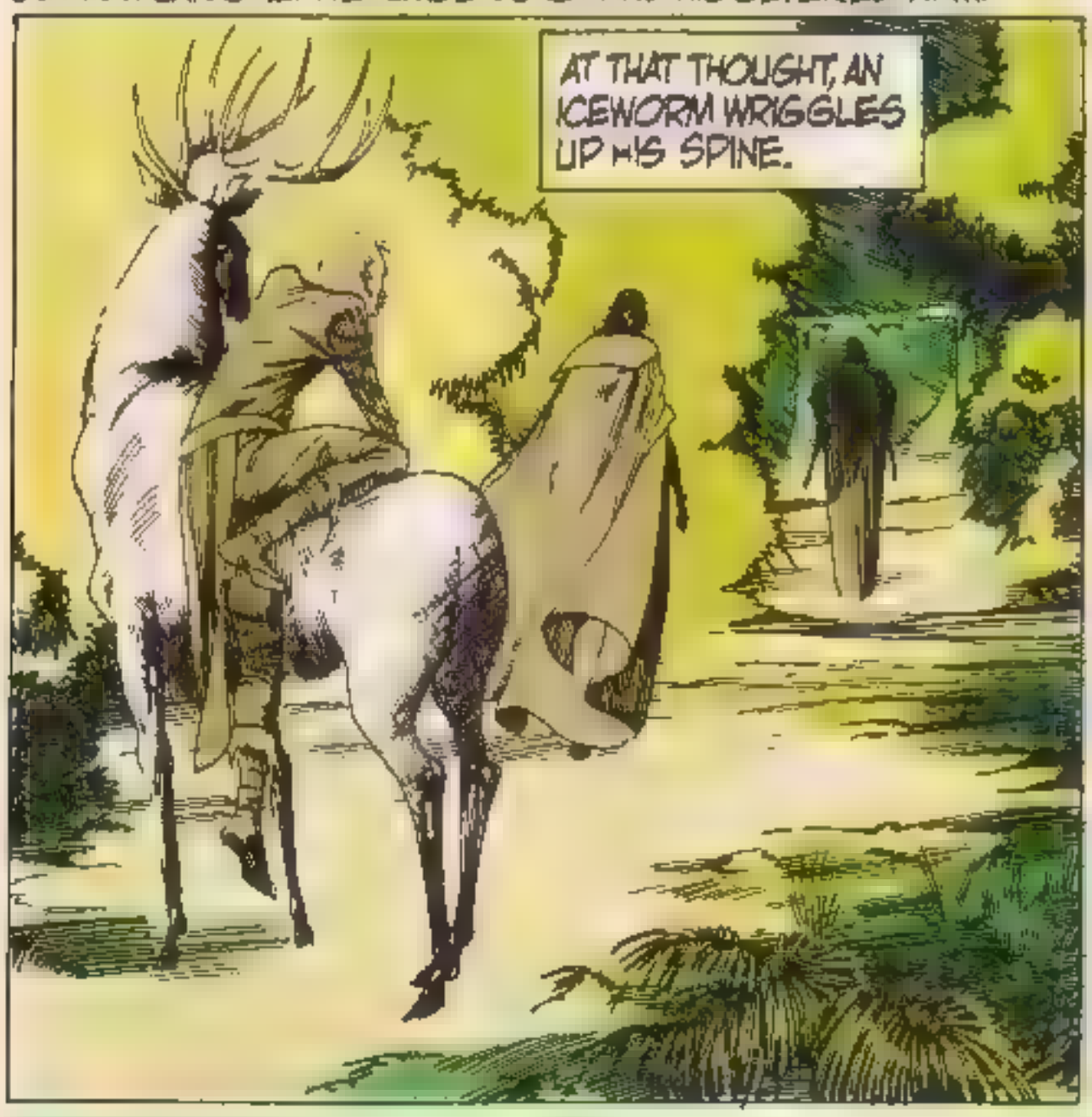
GRIMWOOD'S DAUGHTER

CHAPTER THREE

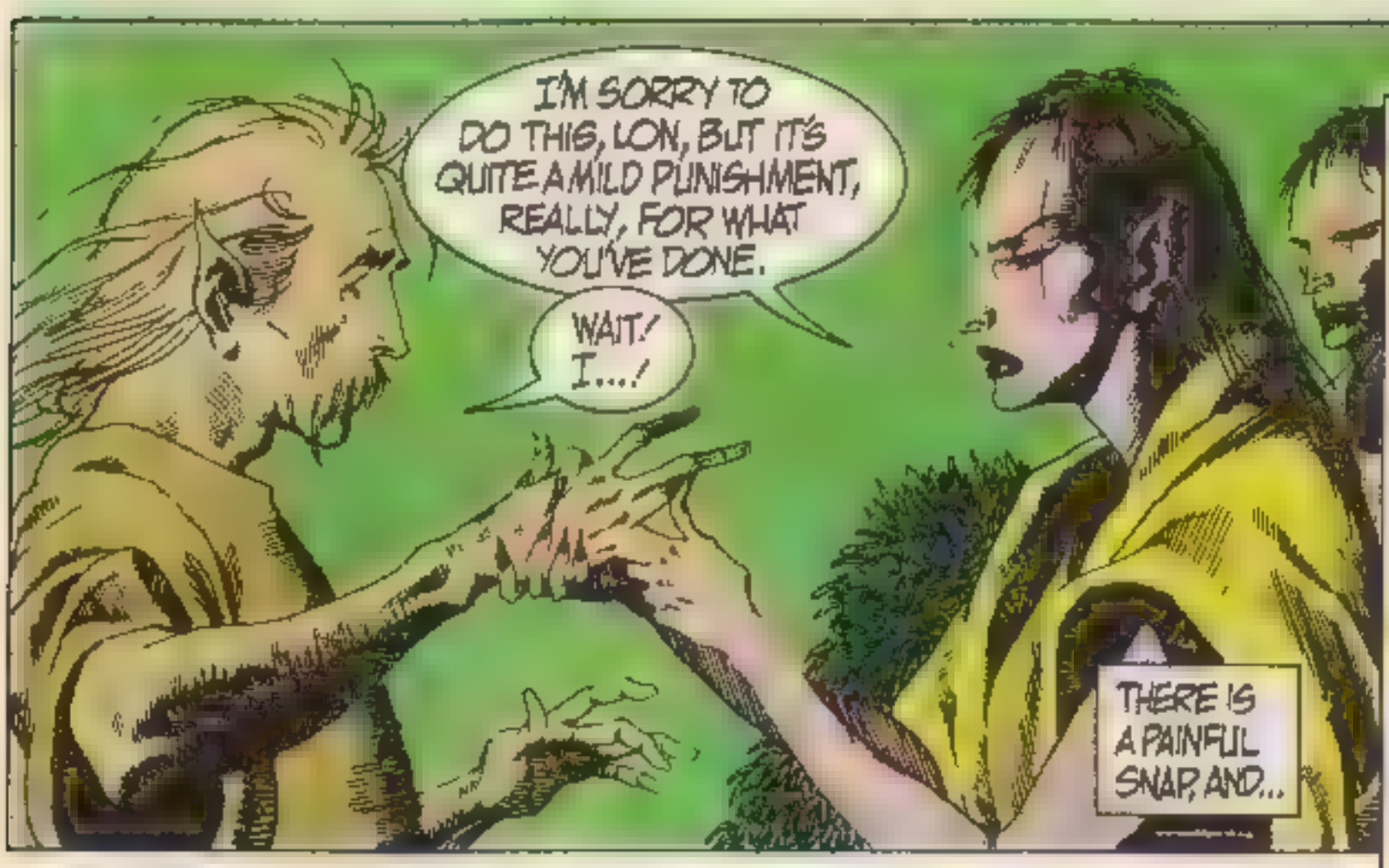

THIS STORY THUS FAR---
THE LAST REMNANTS OF THE ELFIN CLANS HAVE GATHERED AT GRIMWOOD CASTLE TO WAGE THEIR FINAL BATTLE WITH MAN.
TIROL, LEADER OF THE GRIMWOOD CLAN, HAS ENTERED GRIMWOOD FOREST ON THE BACK OF THE WHITE STAG TO MEET HIS LOVER, BRII, AN ELEMENTAL SPIRIT, THE "DAUGHTER OF GRIMWOOD". BUT TIROL HAS BEEN FOLLOWED BY HIS COUSIN LON, AND LON'S CARELESS STEP HAS INVOKED THE ANGER OF THE SPIRITS OF GRIMWOOD.
THE STAG HALTS AND TIROL DISMOUNTS, AND A WOMAN EMERGES FROM THE FOREST. IT IS SHE WHO WILL DETERMINE LON'S FATE.

STRNAD *story* • NOWLAN *art & calligraphy* • SMITH *colors* • GROTH *editing*

LON EYES THE FIGURE IN THE SHADOWS NERVOUSLY. AS A RACE, THE ELEMENTALS ARE OLDER THAN THE ELVES. THEY RULED THE WORLD IN THEIR DAY, AND SOME SAY IT WAS A BETTER PLACE THEN, BUT LON CAN ONLY REMEMBER UNST AND HIS SEVERED ARM.

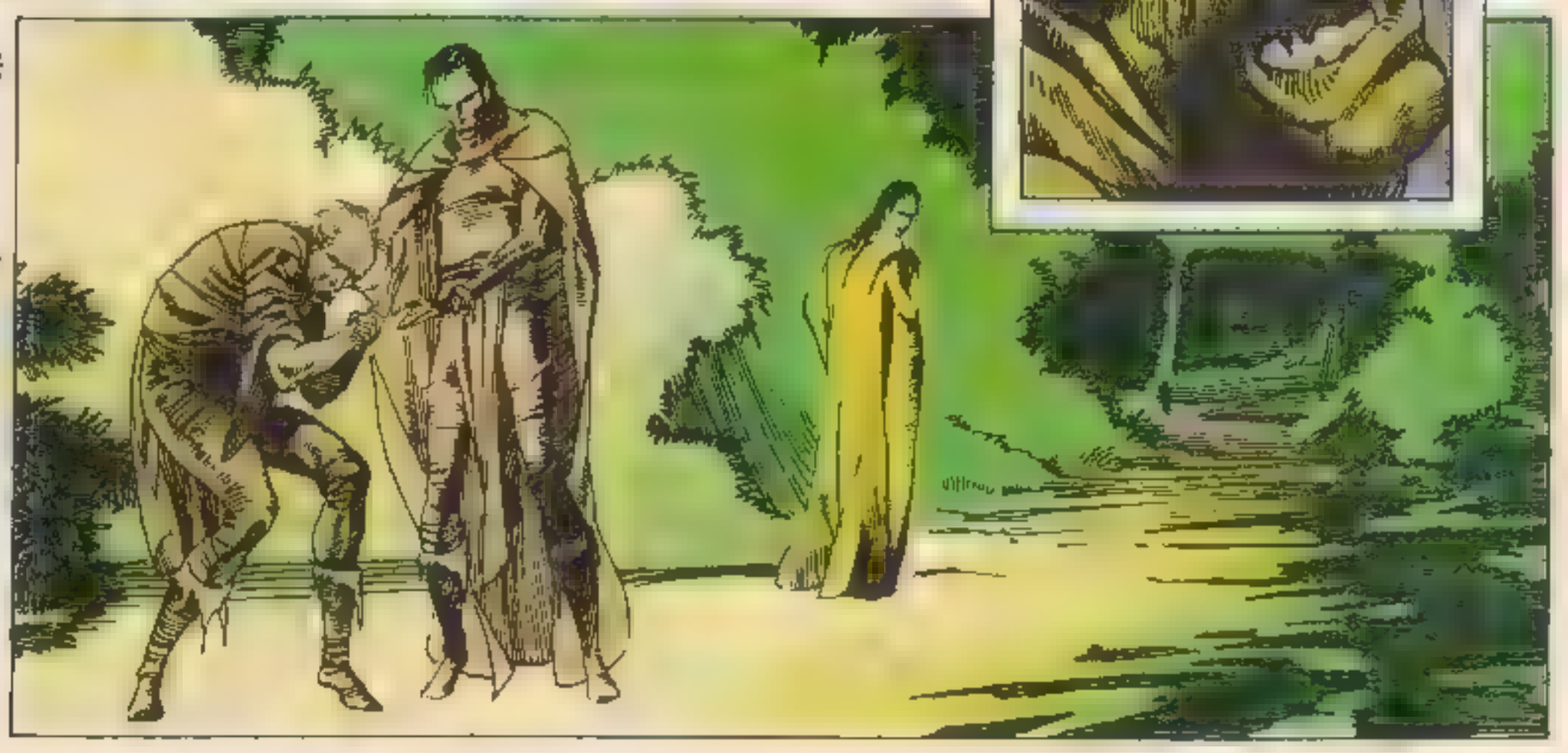


BRII IS A DELIGHTFUL SURPRISE. LON EXPECTED A WITCH, AND HE MEETS AN ENCHANTRESS. SHE OFFERS HER DELICATE HAND, AND LON TAKES IT GLADLY.



TIROL RECITES A SPELL TO EASE LON'S PAIN AND TRIES TO CALM HIM WHILE BRII WITHDRAWS TO THE SANCTITY OF HER BOWER.

JUSTICE HAS BEEN SERVED.



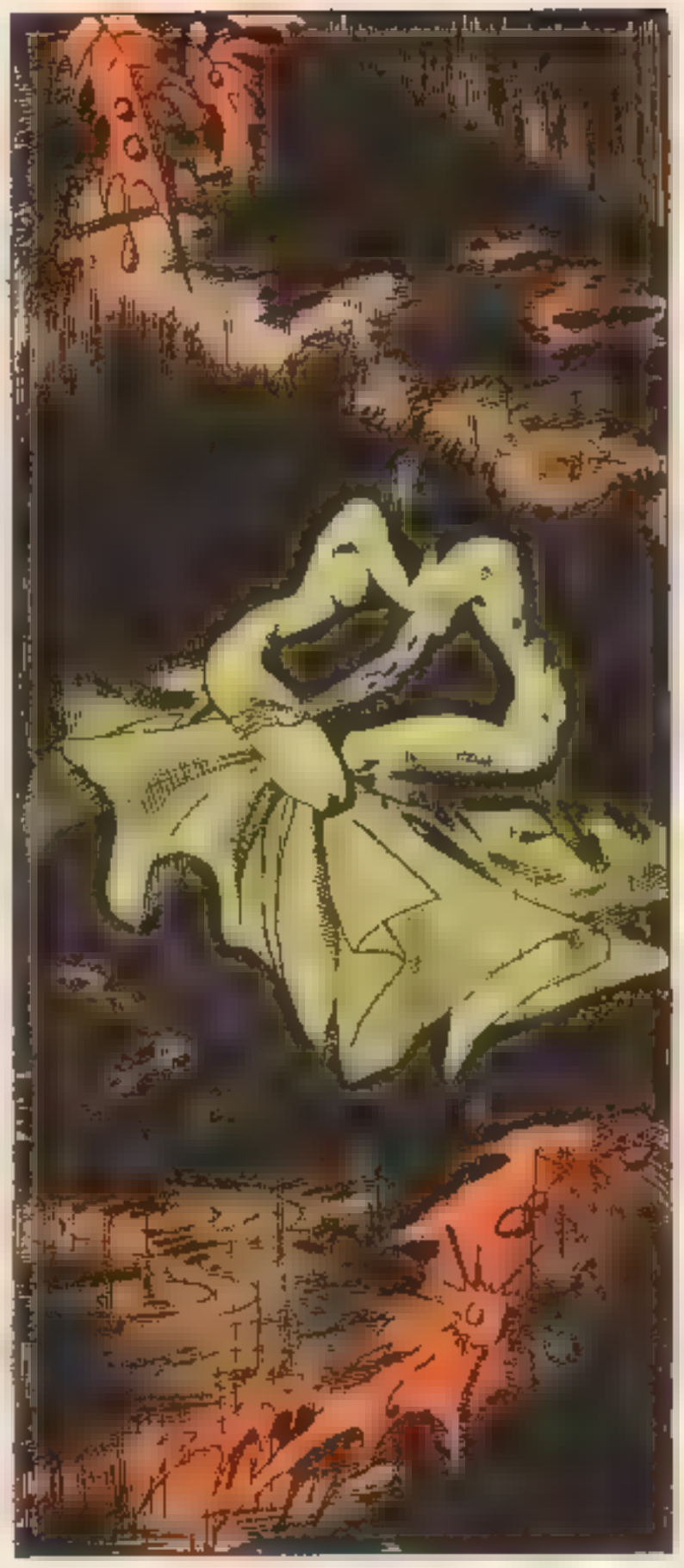
IN A FEW DAYS THIS WILL BE AS GOOD AS NEW. YOUR CARELESS STEP HOWEVER, HAS KILLED A PLANT AND ROBBED ONE OF THE FOREST SPIRITS OF A HOME. BRII WAS MERCIFUL TO YOU. NONE OF THE OTHER SPIRITS WOULD HAVE LET YOU OFF SO EASILY.
YOU SHOULD THANK HER.
I'LL THANK HER TO KEEP HER DISTANCE. HOW CAN I FIGHT WITH A BROKEN FINGER?
I'M SURE YOU'LL FIND A WAY.
NOW, TIROL— WHAT DID THE ELVES SAY TO MY OFFER?
THEY NEVER GOT TO HEAR IT. THEY REFUSE TO DISCUSS RETREAT IN ANY FORM. THEY ARE DETERMINED TO FIGHT.
THEN THEY'LL DIE.
WHAT OFFER?
BRII HAS OFFERED US SAFE PASSAGE TO A SECTION OF THE FOREST DESTROYED BY A RECENT FIRE. WE COULD LIVE THERE. BUILD A SMALL FARM...
FARM? YOU MEAN SCRATCH IN THE DIRT LIKE MISERABLE MEN? NEVER! IT'S AN INSULT!
IT WOULD BE LIFE. DIFFERENT FROM WHAT YOU'RE USED TO, NOT AS PLEASANT, PERHAPS... BUT YOU COULD SCRATCH *SOME* HAPPINESS FROM THE SOIL.

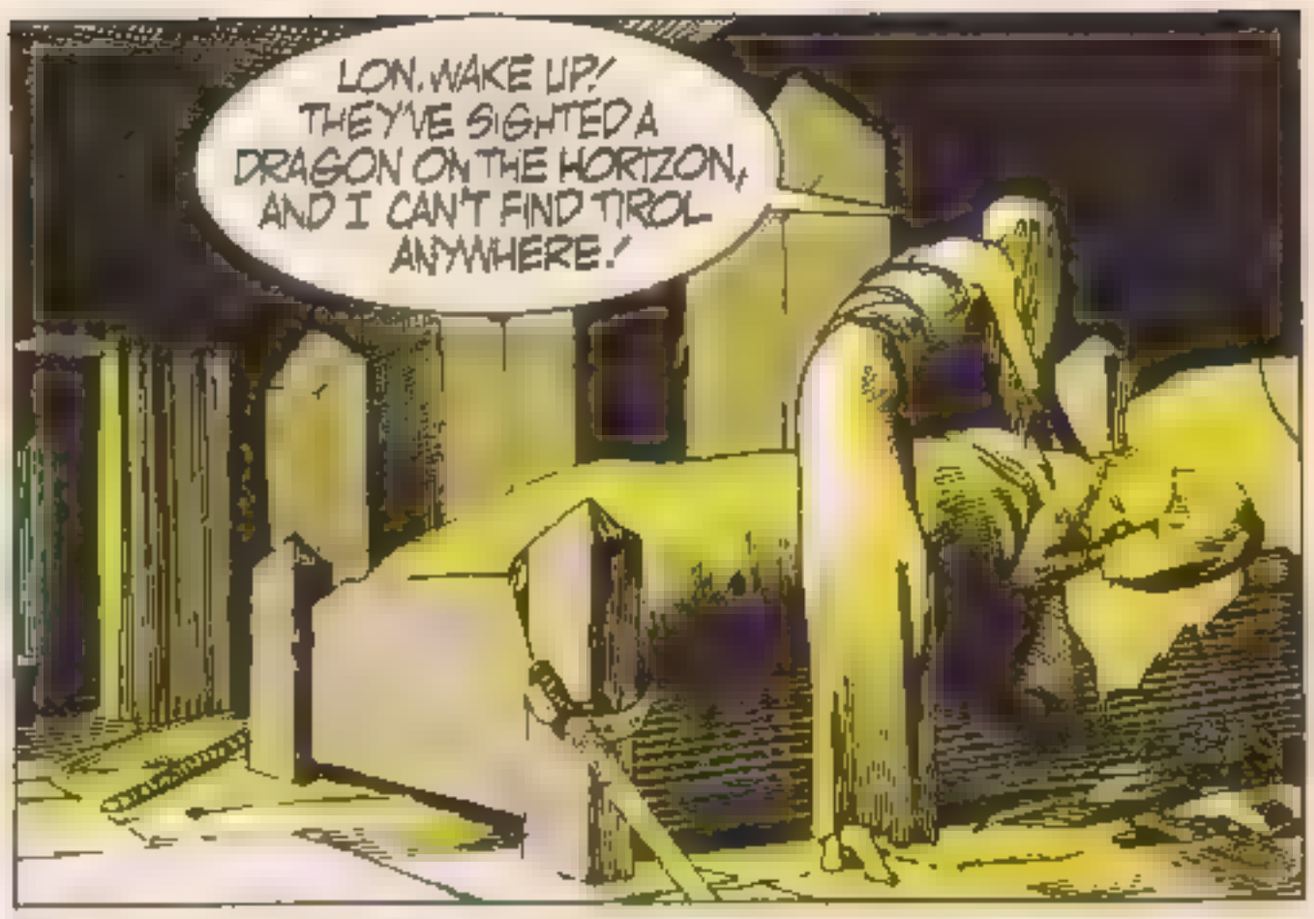
NO! YOU WERE THERE, TIROL! YOU HEARD THE ARGUMENTS. WE AREN'T JUST GIVING UP AND RUNNING INTO THE WOODS... WE WANT TO FIGHT AND FIGHT WE WILL, WITH OR WITHOUT YOU!
AND AS FOR YOUR GIRLFRIEND'S DAMNED OFFER...!
SAVE YOUR BREATH, LON. I PROMISED TO FIGHT AND WHEN THE TIME COMES, THAT'S WHAT I'LL DO. BUT TONIGHT I'M STAYING HERE.
IF YOU WANT TO GO BACK TO THE CASTLE, LON, THE STAG WILL TAKE YOU.
GLADLY!
BE CAREFUL! DON'T SO MUCH AS SPIT UNTIL YOU'RE WELL CLEAR OF THE FOREST!
I'LL NEVER BEAT LON IN OPEN DEBATE. I'LL HAVE TO REACH THE OTHERS INDIVIDUALLY, TELL THEM ABOUT YOUR OFFER... I HAVE TO APPEAL TO THEIR EMOTIONS
EMOTIONS... YES.

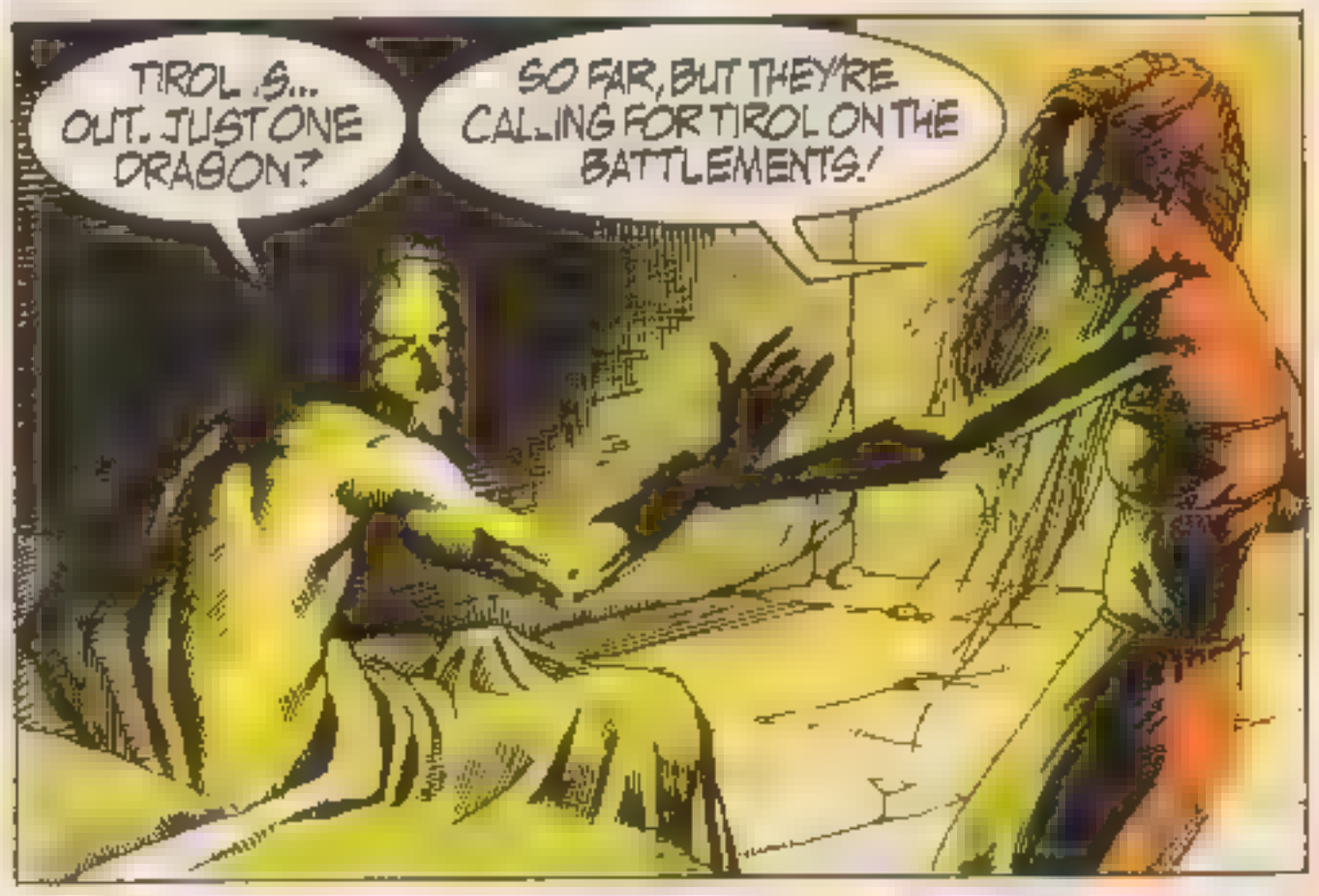
A LIGHT RAIN BEGINS TO FALL.

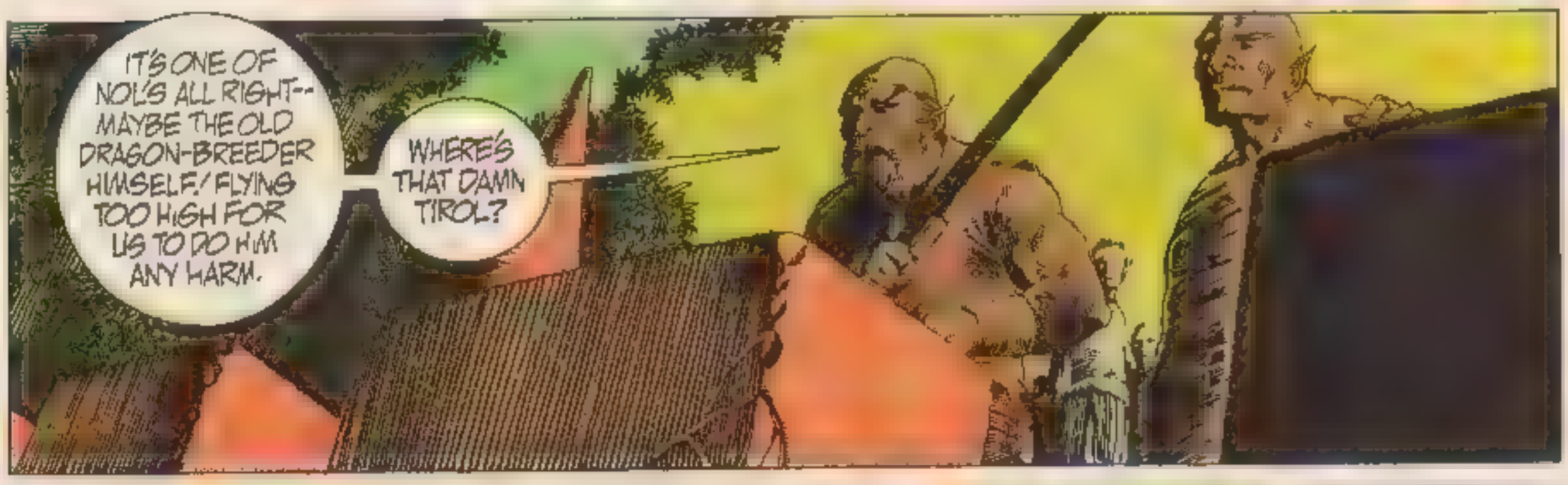
WATER DRIPS LIKE BEADWORK FROM THE BOWER AND THE HOURS FLOW AWAY IN INTRICATE RIVULETS.

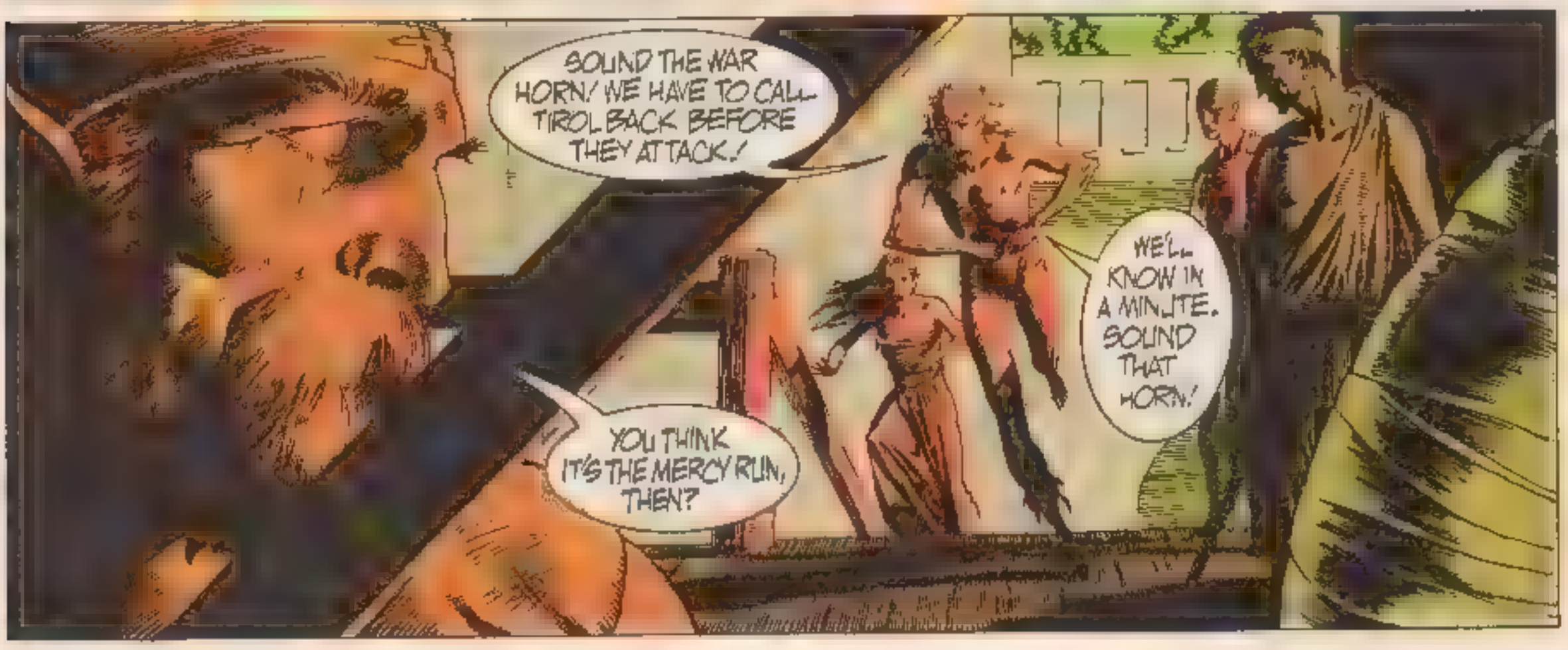
IT IS NEARLY DAWN BEFORE THE LOVERS FINALLY SURRENDER TO SLEEP.



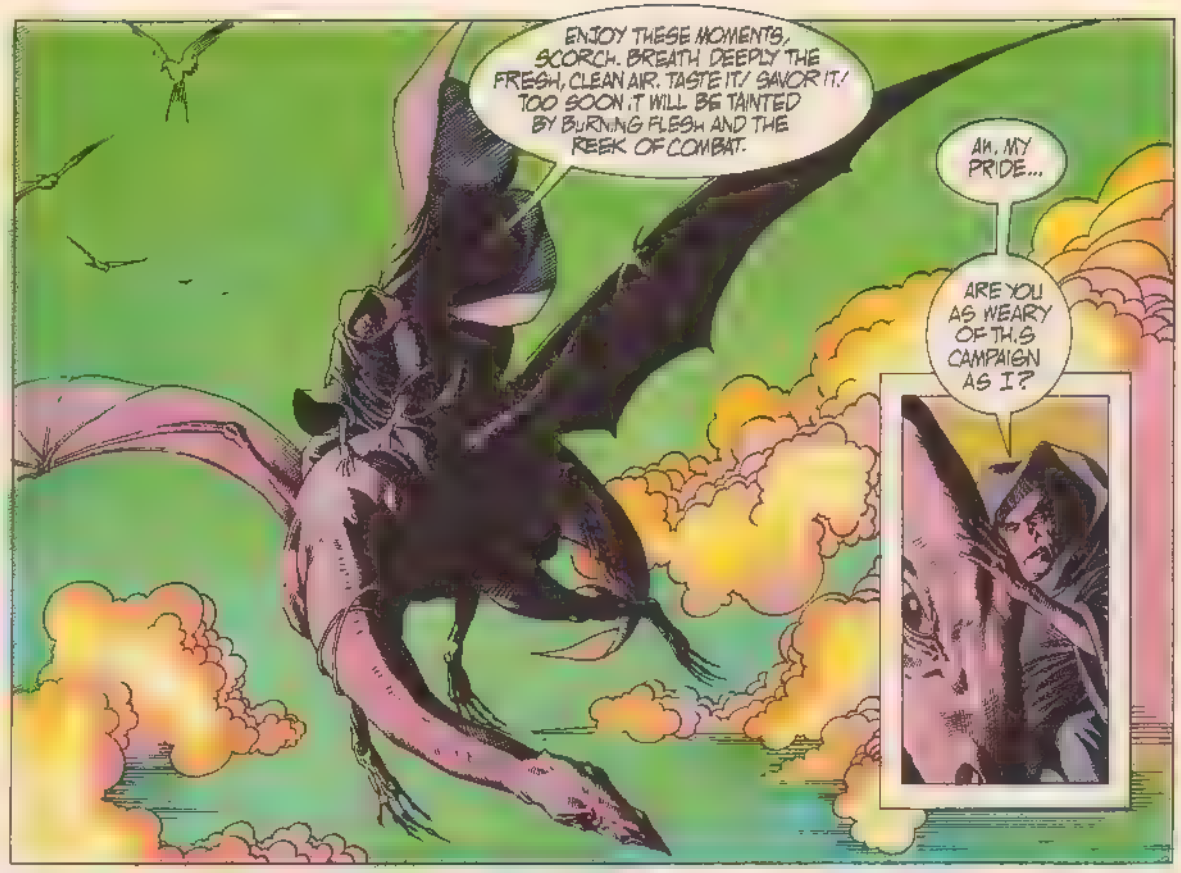


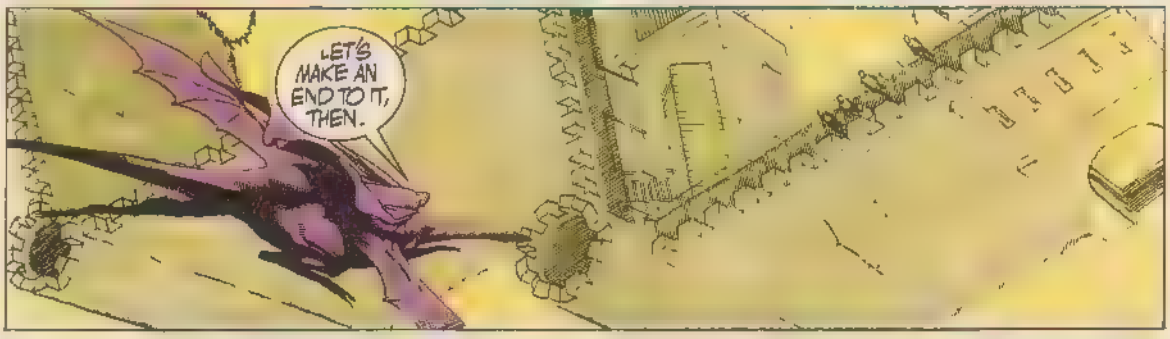


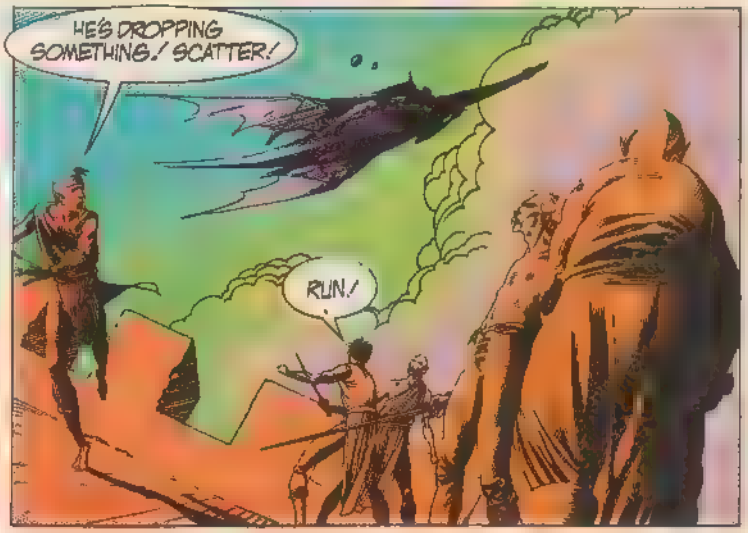

IT'S ONE OF NOL'S ALL RIGHT-- MAYBE THE OLD DRAGON-BREEDER HIMSELF! FLYING TOO HIGH FOR US TO DO HIM ANY HARM.
WHERE'S THAT DAMN TIROL?

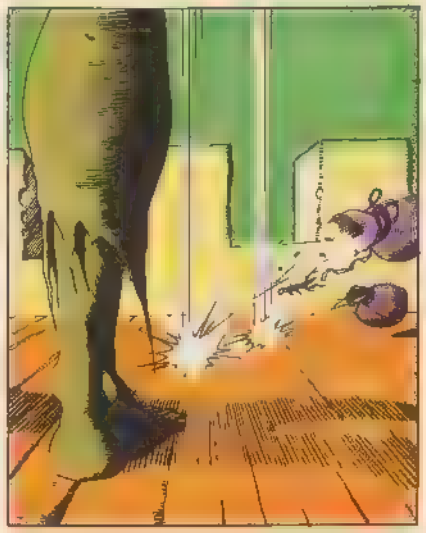

SOUND THE WAR HORN! WE HAVE TO CALL TIROL BACK BEFORE THEY ATTACK!
YOU THINK IT'S THE MERCY RUN, THEN?
WE'LL KNOW IN A MINUTE. SOUND THAT HORN!

LIKE THE ANGRY TRUMPETING OF A GREAT BEAST THE CALL TO ARMS SHAKES THE STONES OF GRIMWOOD CASTLE...
AND PENETRATES EVEN TO THE HEART OF THE FOREST.
DEAR GODS, NOT SO SOON!
CALL THE STAG. I HAVE TO GO BACK. THE WAR HAS BEGUN.
STOP THEM, TIROL. BRING THEM HERE. IT ISN'T TOO LATE.
I'LL TRY, BUT IF THEY CHOOSE TO STAND AND FIGHT TO THE DEATH...
DON'T!
TURN YOUR BACK AND RUN IF YOU HAVE TO, BUT COME BACK TO ME, ALONE IF YOU MUST.'
I'LL BE WAITING.


ENJOY THESE MOMENTS, SCORCH. BREATH DEEPLY THE FRESH, CLEAN AIR. TASTE IT/ SAVOR IT./ TOO SOON IT WILL BE TAINTED BY BURNING FLESH AND THE REEK OF COMBAT.
AH, MY PRIDE...
ARE YOU AS WEARY OF THIS CAMPAIGN AS I?


LET'S MAKE AN END TO IT, THEN.


HE'S DROPPING SOMETHING./ SCATTER!
RUN./



IS IT...?
YES. IT'S THE DEATHBOOT.
YOU COULD HAVE SAVED YOUR DAMN POISON, BLACKHEART! WE'LL NOT LAY DOWN AND DIE TO SUIT YOUR FANCY!
I SEE THEM! THEY'RE ATTACKING!

THE WALL WON'T HOLD THEM LONG, AND THE DRAGONS WILL BE HERE IN SECONDS.

SIGNAL THE ARCHERS.

AYE.

THE ARCHERS STAND FIRM, CHESTS OUT, STOIC BRAVERY PAINTED ON THEIR FACES. BUT THEIR HEARTS BEAT WILDLY, AND AGAINST THE ROARING DRAGONS, THEIR WEAPONS SEEM PUNY AND CHILDLIKE

A SINGLE VOLLEY IS LOOSED BEFORE THE DRAGONS ARE UPON THEM.

AAARGH!

TO BE CONTINUED

LETTERS

Send to: DALGODA, Letters Department, 707 Camino Manzanas, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

Gentlemen,

A recent interview with Gary Groth started with the standard query: "Why do you hate comics?" Even as a joke, this line is getting to wear very thin. I suppose Gary must feel the same way. To any such wits, the output of Fantagraphics Books should be answer enough.

Dalgoda is a case in point. Words fail me. This is a nice comic book. Now, I am aware that "nice" has derogatory undercurrents, but I do not imply any: even "great" sounds too bombastic for such a fun, engaging book. I actually cannot find anything to add to Jan Strnad's presentation of the book in issue 1.

Sword Of The Atom showed how Strnad's deftness of touch could turn a fairly basic plot into pure gold. In case anybody wondered, *Dalgoda* proves this was no accident.

Dennis Fujitake's cartoons and covers for *The Comics Journal* have always been very fine. His artwork on *Dalgoda* is superb.

And *Grimwood's Daughter* starts off quite well for an elf story. Kevin Nowlan's artwork is a joy to behold.

Look, I don't want to gush, but there are few, very few, comic books, I'm eagerly looking forward to the next issue. *Dalgoda* is definitely one of them. In those days of rampant drek, it's a good feeling.

Best of luck for the book, and count me in as a devoted reader.

Patrick Marcel
Etaples France

Dear Dog Lovers,

It's books like *Dalgoda* that keep me reading comics after all these years. Nothing profound, nothing earthshaking, just good solid writing, and attractive artwork. Enough seriousness to keep me interested, but enough humor to keep it fun. A few specific observations:

Dalgoda's people are not descended from Earth canines, but apparently from dog-like ancestors on Canis. Nonetheless, Dalgoda exhibits traits that are typically those of normal Earth-bound dogs, such as acute hearing, acute sense of smell, and a large, indiscriminate appetite. (I loved his reaction to the over-ripe hamburger in issue 1—it brought back memories of all the garbage cans plundered by a Labrador retriever I once had.) And of course, there's the Mobilis Strangulatum from Reg-7, which obviously finds any differences between canine and Canidan too trivial to worry about. I trust you'll continue to reveal further similarities, both physiological and psychological.

I appreciate the way Dennis Fujitake draws his people to look like real people—the men don't all look like bodybuilders, and the women don't all look like Playmates. This realistic rendering complements Jan Strnad's writing, and makes for believable, three-dimensional characters.

What does the symbol on Dalgoda's chest mean, and what exactly did he write at the bottom of the contract he signed in issue 1? Is Dalgoda's writing Japanese, or does Dennis just make up meaningless symbols that look Japanese?

Kenneth Smith's coloring is excellent. I'm glad to see colorists who know how to use better paper, thus getting rich, vibrant color without sacrificing subtlety (in contrast to early attempts to take advantage of higher-quality paper, which looked like someone used a spatula to glop on day-glo paint).

"Grimwood's Daughter" is an interesting back-up feature, a dark, strangely naturalistic elf story to contrast the whimsical "Dogs in Space." There are other contrasts and similarities—one is set in the future, the other in the past, but both have a very strong does of verisimilitude. Both are centered around an impending war of extinction, but in one, humankind is the potential victim, and in the other, we are the aggressors. And in *Dalgoda* the mood has thus far been light, but the potential is there for much more serious stories—while in "Grimwood's Daughter," we are given a hint at the end of the first installment that pervading gloom may be broken from time to time by a little sunlight. I look forward to watching these two stories grow and develop.

Sincerely,

Hank Hoeft
Arlington, TX

Original Dennis Fujitake and Kevin Nowlan art Available from Dalgoda and Grimwood's Daughter

Original artwork is available through Fantagraphics Books. Each page is individually priced. If you're interested in purchasing any art, please send a list of pages you're interested in and a self-addressed, stamped envelope, and we'll send you prices. Pages are sold on a first-come, first-served basis, so please don't daily.

Dalgoda Original Art, 707 Camino Manzanas, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

NEXT ISSUE:

Bad news from Canida . . . A traitor in their midst . . . Revelations and resolutions . . . all in "Dalgoda, Come Home, Part One"!
Story by JAN STRNAD
Art by DENNIS FUJITAKE
Colors by KEN SMITH

PLUS: Grimwood Castle falls to the humans in the penultimate chapter of "Grimwood's Daughter"
Story by JAN STRNAD
Art by KEVIN NOWLAN
Colors by KEN SMITH

On sale in MARCH

☐ Begin my subscription to *Dalgoda* with the next issue off the presses! I enclose a check or money order for $12.00 for the next 6 issues (outside U.S.: $14.50 in U.S. funds).

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